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Message from

Did not get the attached done in time for Cary to give to Symington. Cary is going to give to Colby in hopes Colby will read before Cary goes to see Symington tomorrow.

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3 September 1974

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : The Soviet Military Presence in Somalia

Over the past several years the Soviets have established a growing but still limited military presence in Somalia. As the reopening of the Suez Canal draws nearer, Soviet interest has intensified in Somalia, and the entire Gulf of Aden region.

Military Facilities

The focal point of Soviet interests is the port of Berbera in northern Somalia. Legally, the port is under the jurisdiction of the Somali government but Soviet naval vessels have enjoyed routine access to it since 1972, and some of the facilities at the port appear to be under de facto Soviet control.

Berbera has^a deep and well protected harbor. The main commercial quay has two alongside berths equipped with fresh water, power, and hoisting machinery. Soviet naval units usually tie up at the eastern service quay. The Soviets have added some large finger piers at this quay. There is only enough space for perhaps three or four ships at a time, but the port can accommodate the type of ships the Soviets normally assigned to the Indian Ocean. The Moskva-class helicopter cruiser, now making its first deployment to the area, can enter the harbor but is too large to tie up at the quay.

There are no repair facilities ashore at Berbera. For the past year or so a Soviet repair ship has been berthed at Berbera, and it can provide limited repair services. On

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shore there are housing accommodations, a POL storage depot, and a Soviet radio station to backup naval communications between the USSR and Soviet ships in the Indian Ocean.

Prior to mid-1973, Soviet warships spent a maximum of six months in the Indian Ocean before returning to home port. However, with the recent expansion of the support facilities at Berbera, some Soviet warships have begun year-long deployments to the Indian Ocean. This deployment pattern provides for increased familiarization training for Soviet crews in the Indian Ocean while reducing time lost while transiting to and from Soviet waters. As an indication of the growing importance of Berbera, about two-thirds of the Soviet port calls in the Indian Ocean in 1973 were to Berbera.

Air Facilities: The Soviets have not made military use of the only significant airfield in Somalia, the international airport at Mogadiscio. They are helping the Somali build a new airfield at Dafet in south-central Somalia, and possibly one at Berbera. We think that there is a good chance that Soviet aircraft will eventually use one or perhaps even both of these airstrips in support of their Indian Ocean operations.

Construction of the possible airstrip at Berbera stopped after 2,000 feet of grading in the fall of 1972. At Dafet, which will be the main Somali military airbase, work is moving ahead on a runway in excess of 10,000 feet. An airstrip of this length would be able to accommodate Soviet TU-95 naval reconnaissance aircraft which have sufficient range to conduct surveillance of most of the Indian Ocean.

[REDACTED] The Soviets would probably like, at a minimum, to establish an arrangement such as they have in Conakry, Guinea, where they periodically deploy two or three reconnaissance aircraft and maintain some support facilities for them, but do not control the airfield. To get aircraft to Somalia, the Soviets would have to get overflight permission from countries such as Iran, Turkey, or Egypt.

Other Soviet Presence: Soviet military assistance is the quid pro quo for the use of Somali facilities. We estimate that there are up to 1,500 Soviets in Somalia, including some 700 military advisers. Early this year, the USSR delivered some MIG-21 jet fighters and SA-2 surface-to-air missiles but the Somalis need substantial training and advice before they can use them effectively.

The USSR-Somalia Political Relationship

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The Somalis have long been resisting Soviet pressure to enter into a treaty relationship. Apparently they have decided that their dependence on Soviet military and economic aid makes closer ties with the USSR necessary. There appears to be division in Somali ruling councils over the degree to which Somalia should be dependent on the USSR, and Mogadiscio remains sensitive to criticism by Arab and African governments of its ties with the USSR.

For the Soviets, the treaty is undoubtedly a significant gain, if only because it places bilateral relations on a more formal footing and brings Somalia into the circle of countries with ties to the USSR. Nevertheless, the Soviet relationship with Somalia carries some risks. For example, Mogadiscio could be encouraged by its new Soviet hardware to step up the pressure on Ethiopia. Open hostilities could jeopardize Soviet access to Somali facilities and involve the Soviets in an entanglement they do not want. Reportedly, the new friendship treaty calls for automatic consultations on security matters in the Indian Ocean and the Horn of Africa. The Soviets probably hope that such a provision would enable them to exercise restraint on any Somali decision to confront Ethiopia over the territorial dispute.